1. ENGLISH PROSODIC MORPHOLOGY: MORPHOLOGY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to introduce and define the class of phenomena that will be analysed in this book. We will adopt the perspective of morphological theory, focussing on two major questions:

- What can the research discipline of Prosodic Morphology (McCarthy & Prince 1986, 1993a et seq.) contribute to a definition of truncatory patterns in English?
- What is the status of truncated words in the English word formation system?

With respect to the former question, we will see in section 1.2 that English, like other languages, does not draw a clearcut distinction between ‘ordinary’ morphological processes and Prosodic Morphological processes. Instead, we find that morphological processes differ in terms of the degree to which their output structure is determined by prosodic wellformedness constraints. Truncated words are at the extreme end of the scale. The term Prosodic Morphology will be used in this book as a descriptive category to refer to this end of the scale. The finding that there is no clear dividing line between Prosodic Morphological processes and other morphological processes is in line with recent developments in the research discipline.

The second question posed above directly addresses the view widely held in the literature that truncated forms are both structurally and semantically unpredictable. Results from recent empirical studies render this view questionable. Evidence comes from the investigation of the structural properties of truncated forms in this book as well as from recent studies of the meaning and function of such forms (most notably, Schneider 2003). The alleged structural and semantic unpredictability of truncated forms have led scholars to assume that truncation is not word formation. We will conclude that also this view is in need of revision.

The data in (1) illustrate the processes we will be concerned with: truncated personal names, y-hypocoristics, unsuffixed clippings, y-clippings, and o-clippings.

(1) English Prosodic Morphological processes

a. unsuffixed truncated names:
   Pete  (< Peter)
   Trish  (< Patricia)
b. *y*-hypocoristics:
Pety (< Peter)
Trishy (< Patricia)

c. unsuffixed clippings:
fab (< fabulous)
exec (< executive)

d. *y*-clippings:
dafty (< daffodil)
veggie (< vegetable)

e. *o*-clippings:
delo (< delegate)
intro (< introduction)

The terminology adopted here largely follows the terminology used within the research tradition of Prosodic Morphology (McCarthy & Prince 1986 et seq.), where these processes are across the board referred to as *truncation* processes. Other terms used for truncated forms in the literature are *stump words* (Jespersen 1965repr) or *clippings* (e.g. Marchand 1960, Kreidler 1979). For reasons of convenience I will reserve the term *clipping* for truncated words which are not personal names. I will use the term *truncated names* to refer to the forms exemplified in (1.a). The distinction between clippings and truncated names is well grounded for English in the fact that, as we will see in this book, the two classes of processes exhibit important structural differences. The label *y*-hypocoristics has been chosen for the forms in (1.b) on the basis of the terminology found in descriptive grammatical accounts (e.g. Bauer & Huddleston 2002).

The processes exemplified in (1.b), (1.d), and (1.e) involve the suffixes -*y* and -*o*. Apart from -*y* and -*o*, English also has other suffixes which may be classified as Prosodic Morphological. -*s* and -[ə] (spelled -*a* or, in nonrhotic dialects, -*er*) are cases in point (Schneider 2003: 109ff. on British English and Simpson 2001 on Australian English). Examples are provided in (2).

(2) a. *s*-suffixed forms:
Gabs (< Gabrielle)
Pabs (< Pablo)
Cuts (< Cutler)

b. [ə]-suffixed forms:
Jimma (< Jimmy)
Micka (< Mickey)
Ecker (< Eric)

(data from Simpson 2001: 106f.)